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051019Z Nov 05

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 MANAMA 001626

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/31/2015

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [BA](#)

SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR MEETS WITH SHURA COUNCIL CHAIRMAN AL MOUSAWI

REF: A. MANAMA 1594

[1](#)B. MANAMA 1553

Classified By: Ambassador William T. Monroe, reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: In an October 30 meeting with the Ambassador, Shura Council Chairman Dr. Faisal Al Mousawi said he anticipates that the opposition political societies will participate in the 2006 parliamentary elections and will gain between 14 and 18 seats at the expense of the Al Minbar bloc and the Independent bloc. He also anticipates that more than 20 percent of the Shura Council will change and admits that he may not be part of a new Shura Council. He said that the Shura Council is appointed after the elections to provide a counterweight to the members of the elected Council of Representatives (COR). Al Mousawi counseled against an Embassy response to counter GTMO detainee Juma Al Dossary's claims of abuse. End Summary.

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Final Session of Parliament  
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[1](#)2. (C) The Ambassador met with Shura Council Chairman Dr. Faisal Al Mousawi October 30 to talk about this fourth and final legislative session of this parliament's four-year term. Al Mousawi said that legislation has backed up in the elected COR due to the slow progress on labor reform legislation. He said that there are approximately 65 pieces of legislation, including anti-terrorism legislation, ready for the COR to take up, but he doubted whether the Council will be able to get to all of them during this session.

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Political Society Participation  
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[1](#)3. (C) Al Mousawi told the Ambassador that he expects Al Wifaq to participate in the parliamentary elections, to take place October 2006. He said that the opposition lost ground by boycotting the 2002 elections. He referred to a meeting with opposition leaders two years ago during which some admitted that the boycott had been a mistake. Al Mousawi estimated that the opposition would win 14 to 18 (of 40) seats in the next election, but would not have enough support to gain a majority. He singled out the seven-member Al Minbar bloc and the eight-member Independent bloc as those that may lose strength due to opposition participation in the next election.

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Shura Council Changes Next Year?  
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[1](#)4. (C) The Ambassador inquired about anticipated changes in the makeup of the Shura Council following the next election. Al Mousawi said that the number of members will not change from the current 40, but that he anticipates a turnover of more than 20 percent, i.e., more than 8 members. When asked whether people lobby the King to be appointed, Al Mousawi said people do not. He said that the King watches the current members, and he knows those who do not keep up on the legislation, do not contribute much to Shura business and debate, or are too busy with their personal business outside the Council to be effective. The King has been considering other possible candidates for the Council. Al Mousawi said that Shura members will be chosen after the election to provide counterbalance to the makeup of the COR; this is how the Shura was appointed in 2002.

[1](#)5. (C) When asked whether he would remain chairman in a new Shura Council, Al Mousawi admitted that he has been thinking about returning to the medical field. He is an orthopedic surgeon and keeps his British medical license current. He told the Ambassador that he has received an offer from the World Health Organization to serve in Geneva and would like to continue his involvement with the Irish University facility in Manama.

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GTMO Detainees  
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16. (C) Al Mousawi said that on October 29 he met with the Prime Minister, who expressed frustration about criticism of the GOB for not working hard enough on the return of the Guantanamo detainees. Al Mousawi reported that the PM said he "believes some will come back." (Note: His meeting with the PM was two days prior to the government leak about the imminent return of the detainees (Ref A). End note.) The Ambassador expressed concern that the public would treat GTMO returnees like heroes. Al Mousawi stated that the longer they are held, the more they become heroes to the public. When asked about his thoughts on an Embassy statement to the media to counter claims by detainee Juma Al Dossary (Ref B), Al Mousawi counseled silence. He admitted that their stories may be exaggerated, but that countering the claims will only invite more talk.

MONROE